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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

NIC #00532-84
23 January 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Vice Chairmen, National Intelligence Council
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM : Fritz W. Ermarth
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT : Soviets Signal New Moves

1. On 20 January Bill Beecher ran two stories in the Boston Globe on Andropov's leadership and US-Soviet relations respectively, citing high Soviet sources.

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2. On Andropov [REDACTED] adds a lot of authority (true and false) to the line that the General Secretary is very much in charge, despite illness, and likely to return in a few weeks. On US-Soviet relations, [REDACTED] clearly angling for a marked improvement in both the tone and substance of relations, orchestrated through embassy channels, and with arms control and regional security issues on the agenda.

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3. Beecher told me that today (Monday) he has a third [REDACTED] in which the Soviets say (paraphrased), "If the President wants it, we can have a SALT II 'interim agreement' by July based on all the agreed and still pertinent elements." I queried Beecher as to whether there was any of Gromyko's acrimony [REDACTED] complaints about the ubiquity of US security interests and challenges to the legitimacy of the Soviet empire. Beecher said there were none. Did [REDACTED] display any reluctance to give the President the political boost that an early improvement in US-Soviet relations would deliver? Not in the least, according to Beecher.

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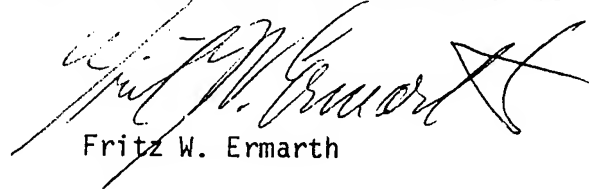
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4. At this point, it is not clear whether [REDACTED] a) playing his own game against the background of a fluid decisionmaking situation in Moscow (contradicted by his line on Andropov, but still perhaps the reality), b) playing the good cop versus Gromyko's bad cop for tactical openings, c) signalling Moscow's real interest in getting the post-KAL frost behind them, d) trying to ensure that no special channel, as per Kissinger's suggestion, be set up that would bypass him. The trouble with "b" and especially "c" is that the real winner would be Reagan the candidate. This contradicts a lot of good reporting on the attitude in Moscow, plus the logic of the situation. At the same time, while less likely, we could be seeing the beginning of a Soviet line based on the expectation of having to deal with this Administration for another five years (also reflected in good reporting) and a desire to do it on the basis of pre-KAL atmospherics.

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5. My own judgment is that tactical probing plus leadership indecision in Moscow plus genuine dispute about what to do next accounts for the mixed signals we have been getting. In the net, the outlook is still for a stubborn hard line out of Moscow while they figure what to do. For his own part, [REDACTED] I suspect, a bit out on a limb. However, for such an experienced and careful operator to take risks itself means a new political situation. We are entering a period when the fullest read out from State is vital to sound judgment.

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Fritz W. Ermarth

Attachments: Boston Globe Articles

- 1) Signs of the absent Andropov's control
- 2) US, Soviets agree to air top issues

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Signs of the absent Andropov's control

WILLIAM BEECHER

WASHINGTON — Shortly before going to Stockholm, Secretary of State George Shultz asked Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin whether the lingering illness of Yuri Andropov was causing a delay in the decision-making process in Moscow.

"Have you noticed any unusual delay in my government's responses to your questions?" Dobrynin is reported to have answered. "Don't I get back to you quicker sometimes than you do to me?"

American policy-makers are working on the hypothesis that Andropov, while physically debilitated, is mentally untimpaired and is very much still in charge of the Soviet government.

From recent outward political signs at the Supreme Soviet, where a number of Andropov proteges were elevated to key positions in the ruling Politburo, it looks as if the Soviet president is consolidating his grasp on power.

However, these men have been merely added to the power structure, while rivals have not been purged. Since Andropov has not been able to make an appearance in five months, there remains the question whether he has the strength to get rid of those who don't agree with him and whether would-be challengers are posi-

tioning themselves for a possible power struggle.

Last November, when Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau asked for an appointment with Andropov so he could sound him out on a proposal for an arms control summit of five nuclear nations, he was told he would have to wait until Dec. 20 for a specific date to be scheduled. The assumption, obviously, was that Andropov would be well enough by that time so foreign leaders could be received.

When Trudeau pressed again recently for an answer, he was asked whether he wouldn't like instead to see another Soviet leader. In Ottawa yesterday, the Canadians said they had just received a message from Andropov saying that he would meet with Trudeau "soon" after all.

Soviet sources say Andropov himself expected to address the Supreme Soviet in late December and spent a lot of time from his bed in a dacha outside Moscow working on the speech. But it had to be read by another in his absence.

American analysts speculate that Andropov is being prevented from appearing by one of two ailments, or perhaps a combination of the two:

— Severe kidney problems requiring him to spend several hours at a time on a dialysis machine to cleanse the bloodstream of impurities which his ailing kid-

neys cannot filter out. There is a rumor that a kidney transplant operation failed.

— A stroke which either disfigured a side of his face or paralyzed one side of his body. East European sources say he has suffered partial paralysis. If this is the case, efforts might be under way to help him regain control of body or facial muscles.

In any case, well-placed Soviet officials now say they expect their leader to reappear some time next month.

He personally controls decision-making, they insist, by approving those agenda items the Politburo will take up. Konstantin Chernenko, his major rival for power after the death of Leonid Brezhnev, is said to report to Andropov at his bedside on the Politburo's discussions and tentative decisions. "If he disagrees with anything, that item will be on the Politburo's agenda again the next day," a knowledgeable Russian source declared.

All this is of more than passing interest since the Reagan Administration is trying not only to get the Russians to resume arms control negotiations, but also to agree to high level policy discussions to try to defuse potential crises in the Middle East, southern Africa, Afghanistan and Central America.

That requires a policy decision which only the top man, Andropov, can make. A



DOROTHY AHLE

paralysis of leadership would doom the effort before it was given a chance.

But the decision to send Gromyko to Stockholm and to hold a private session with Shultz — despite the frostiness of relations — also required a decision at the top. So the prognosis is not necessarily bad.

William Beecher is the Globe's diplomatic correspondent.

US, Soviets agree to air top issues

By William Beecher
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - The United States and the Soviet Union, in the first sign of a potential thaw in East-West relations in several months, have agreed in Stockholm to a more active diplomatic dialogue on all major issues dividing them.

Well-placed American and Soviet sources who revealed this here also confirmed reports of an expected resumption soon in Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna. When the talks were recessed last Dec. 15, the Warsaw Pact nations refused to set a date for resumption. The talks now are expected to get under way in about two months.

The sources said Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, during their five hours of talks in Stockholm, agreed to open a much more active exploration of defusing potential crises in the Mideast, Afghanistan, southern Africa and RELATIONS, Page 11

US, Soviets agree to step up dialogue on top issues

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in America. The impasse over nuclear weapons negotiations will be addressed.

To begin with, officials said, exploratory talks will be handled in a region through Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and in Moscow through American Ambassador Arthur Hartman.

To the extent that potential breakthroughs appear to come in reach, officials of both sides the talks could be escalated to the Gromyko level. They do not exclude the possibility of a meeting between President Reagan and Soviet President Yuri Andropov.

Thinks is to report to Reagan on talks with Gromyko today. American officials expressed a deep optimism that the Soviet-American relationship, which has been in deep freeze since the shooting down of the South Korean airliner in September and the Russian withdrawal from medium-range missile talks in Geneva in November, is ready to enter a new stage.

In which both sides will expand and intensify efforts to see if some agreements are possible.

"These are only straws in the wind," one official said, "but they certainly suggest Soviet leaders have not ruled out the possibility of doing constructive business with Reagan before the next election."

In a televised address on Monday, the President used uncharacteristically conciliatory language and called for a constructive dialogue with the Soviets.

Presumably in order to reassure Washington that despite the illness of Andropov, he is in full control of day-to-day policy decisions and thus able to respond to serious American initiatives, Soviet sources told The Globe that Andropov personally decides the agenda for each working session of the ruling Politburo.

And after each session, they said, Konstantin Chernenko goes to Andropov's bedside at his dacha outside Moscow and reports on the Politburo discussion and tentative decisions. If he disagrees with any decisions, those subjects are immediately put on the agenda for the next Politburo meeting, the sources said.

In the meantime, The Globe has also learned that Reagan is considering an MBFR proposal discussed at a National Security Council meeting last week which would:

- Seek an agreement on specific verification provisions to include on-site inspection of possible violations of troop reductions and full-time manning of checkpoints to keep track of troops relating into and out of Europe from both East and West. Last fall the Russians in Vienna expressed willingness in principle to agree to such provisions.

- Propose a first-stage reduction of 13,000 American troops and 30,000 Soviet troops.

- Propose thereafter a temporary freeze on forces by both the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while negotiations proceed. The two blocs would then seek to come to terms on their different counts on the size of Soviet forces within striking distance of West Europe.

the disparity of counts now being more than 150,000.

- Seek a final treaty arrangement to come down to a ceiling of 900,000 ground and air forces on each side, no more than 700,000 of which could be ground troops. The reductions would include forces from each of the countries in the two blocs.

One senior American official, addressing apparent Soviet willingness to resume the MBFR talks, said: "Don't forget these negotiations are with Western Europe, not just with the United States; the Russians do want to deal with the West Europeans."

Nonetheless, he and others conceded that forward movement on MBFR would be seen as a signal that the Soviets were coming out of their sulky period, following the deployment of American Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in West Germany, Britain and Italy.

Expansion of low-visibility talks with the United States also would point in the same positive direction. Soviet and American sources

pointed out that for three years Dobrynin and Hartman have been seeing senior policy-makers in the capitals to which they are assigned, but they have served more as message-carriers than active negotiators.

Now the intention is to give them broader latitude to explore possible breakthroughs, as Dobrynin used to do during earlier Administrations.

For example, the Soviets have long wanted an extensive dialogue with the United States on their respective objectives in the Mideast to see whether there might be mutual interest in cooperating to reduce instability in the region.

The Russians complain that the Americans merely come to them, for instance, to urge that they restrain Syria in the use of force in Lebanon rather than to explore a comprehensive discussion of Mideast issues.

By the same token, US officials complain that when they have complained to the Soviets about Communist bloc arms going to Central America and the role of Cuba in stirring up trouble there,

the Russians invariably say: "Talk to Havana."

American analysts were very interested in the report on the mechanism by which Andropov is said to maintain daily control of decision-making in Moscow from his sick bed.

The fact that Chernenko is reportedly used as the link between the Politburo and Andropov, they said, not only seems to make him second-in-command but may be a sop to the party apparatus. The coalition which is believed to have vaulted Andropov to the top - and kept him there despite his disability - is thought to be the armed forces and the security services.

Analysts note that during Leonid Brezhnev's bouts of ill health, Chernenko is understood to have chaired Politburo meetings for him and kept him minutely informed of what transpired there. "The use of Chernenko in this role by Andropov seems to reflect a desire to create patterns of routine and normalcy even when a leader is ailing," one planner said, "so that jockeying for power can be minimized."